

# Hot Well Dressed Women Will Wear

By Anne Rittenhouse

## FRENCH DESIGNERS PUT FORTH A GRABBAG OF FASHIONS

Variety Pays Best, Hence the Lack of Coordination—One May Draw Something Old or New

It might be said that the French frocks show novelties more than novelty. Few of the gowns are commonplace. Each and all of them show surprising features.

They introduce old ideas, but these are wrapped up in new coverings. They are sugar coated pills in some cases. One thing is quite true: that peace shows the same wide range of styles that prevailed during war. It was thought by the observers who watched fashions following in the footsteps of political events that the designers would combine on some novelty. Possibly, during the epoch which we consider as supreme in dress movements, there was the same uncertainty of line, the same lack of coordination that we observe to-day in the new clothes which the prophets thought would proclaim a significant change in women's apparel.

As far as the French exhibitions are concerned, no unusual or eccentric style of dress has been launched that would indicate a general movement toward something new. It is quite evident to the buyers and the writers that there has been little consultation among the designers of Paris as to the introduction of a decided new movement in apparel. This was what was expected; this has not happened. It may be that we look back upon history—that is, the history of apparel—as a complete thing, and do not see the monthly changes and individual variations that happened at that time. We look back upon it now as from an airplane, not seeing much except the large grouping of special features. Possibly, during the epoch which we consider as supreme in dress movements, there was the same uncertainty of line, the same lack of coordination that we observe to-day in the new clothes which the prophets thought would proclaim a significant change in women's apparel.

No Lack of Caprice. Mind you, there is no lack of sensationism in the new clothes. They fairly reek with the kind of features that attract attention, encourage criticism, bring out protest. But as a whole the effort reminds one of a grabbag at a church fair. You pay money, put your hand into a mass of things and bring out something new

or old, wrapped up in a covering that disguises its outline. All the French designers seem to have cast all the apparel ideas of the world, good and bad, new and old, into the grabbag for spring.

On the other hand, when there is no coordination among the designers, when individualism is rampant, variety is the catchword of the season. No shop can lay down the law by saying to its customers: "This, madam, and this alone, is the new thing."

When a shop can say that there are fifty new gowns, each of which stands alone in originality and brilliancy, then the shop has a slogan that calls in the crowd. When the feature stands out conspicuously as the sole and dominating feature of the season it can be reckoned on that a thousand women will be disgusted with it and insist that such caprice is not for them.

The shopkeeper sees his patrons turn badly away from the things they will not wear. But when short and long jackets, short and long skirts, surplus fronts and straight lines from shoulder to hip, panels and no panels, flounces or hems, embroidery or braid are each offered as equal in importance in the fashion, then the public smiles and warms itself into enthusiasm for clothes.

Reminders of the War. It is too early to make a complete summary of the fashions that France turned out during the last six weeks, and which have arrived in this country. But there are things which the student of history and fashion combined must know. Those who have studied Paris in her various and terrific cataclysms have an idea how she will act in this one. It was building on this foundation when a few of the prophets foretold the return of clothes that might be called indecent, and to all those features which made the Directorate famous.

We have to face the fact that clothes that might run through them, one sees everywhere the influence of that period of French history which linked the horrors of the Revolution to the dawn of the First Empire.



New and sensational gown from Jenny of Paris. It is of black satin, and the outstanding feature is a large apron of gray metallic cloth which can be worn as a cape. The gown is suggested by the costume of the French war workers. The second figure shows the costume with the apron used as a cape.

resemble; it is doubtful if the world would permit that again. The horrors of the Revolution were not any worse than this war, and the menace of the Terror has kinship to the menace which now hangs over Europe in the Bolshevik; women's minds are finer and saner than they were then.

The world would not permit another Mme. Tallien to appear at the opera clothed in unlined white tulle to the waist only, but it did permit women to appear at the opera in Paris in gowns wrapped so tightly about the

figure was bare except for a fold of tulle and a chain of jewels over the shoulders. The significant feature in French clothes which err, we think, in good taste is the excessive shortness of the skirts. There is no getting away from this feature of fashion. Ankle length is considered exceedingly long. The majority of skirts show the entire curve of the leg. When the skirt is not actually cut off five inches below the knee it is transparent from there to its hem, which is well above the ankle.

Different Lines in Drapery. This struggle for and against the short skirt is the dominant topic among those who handle clothes. If you weary of the subject you will be human, for the reiteration of this one fact, and America's protest against it, will probably occur daily for the next two months.

There are other features in clothes that can be discussed without heated argument. There is the drapery of the skirt, as an example. It is sufficiently diverse to please a continent full of many women with many minds. The drapery goes upward in front in the Oriental manner, or it goes upward in the back in the Victorian manner. You can take your choice. The artist says that each of these fashions requires its own type of figure, and that both have been put in the commercial market because there is no standard in women's carriage. If you are upright and stately, you can wear the clothes of Mrs. Langtry in her prime; if you stoop and sink and curve in your back, you can be as Oriental as a Babylonian.

Two such figures can go side by side and each be considered a correct type, but woe to the woman who chooses the kind of drapery that does not go with her carriage. If you carry yourself like a slave-maid of Cleopatra, then pull the drapery of your skirt upward in front and wrap your hips with jeweled bands; if you are stately as a lily and as upright as a hollyhock, then be Victorian.

Peasant Styles in Force. It is rather a good world, don't you think? when each type can be satisfied; when each woman can wear the thing that diths diths and accentuates her special style. That is the dress millennium which the artist craves.

To those who are not quite familiar with the workings of the various Paris designers it means little to say that Jenny carries out this season her aptitude for practical fashions, and that she takes up the munition workers, the canteen workers and the various industrials as inspirations for

Skirts Draped Up in Back or Front as One's Figure Dictates—Soft Fabrics, Straight Lines Continue

many of her new gowns. You may remember that last season she made a great success in this country with a frock of black velvet and white satin which was taken from the costume of the canteen worker in Paris, and she called it "Ma Cherie." This was the phrase used by all our American boys to the French girls who served them with hot coffee. These girls would not have permitted it from a Frenchman, but they adored it from the Americans. So Jenny, with true French humor, embodied the whole situation in a gown.

This year she sends over a kind of working gown which might be taken from the peasant or the industrial. The frock is black satin and has short sleeves and the neck well cut out, with a careless collar thrown across the back. The outstanding feature of the frock, however, is a large apron of munition-gray metallic cloth, which can be worn either as an apron or a cape. This is a wonderfully clever idea. It suggests so many different things of the war worker. The apron, with its metallic glitter, suggests the ceaseless making of munitions which went on for four years, and which was the work of the French girl; and the fact that the apron could be turned into a cape suggested the peasantry and industrial over all France.

Undoubtedly this gown will prove a success in this country. Even if it is not worn as it is, it is one of those sensational frocks that every shop likes to get in its possession.

Now here is an evidence of the chaos that exists in fashion: Side by side with this practical model, suggestive of the tremendous physical efforts put out through the war in France, is a dinner gown by Bulloz, who is well known to Americans through his highly artistic and brilliantly sensational work. This frock is as frankly Babylonian as anything in apparel. The skirt, of black satin, is extremely short and it is caught up in the back by a strand of jet beads, which goes over the shoulder. This skirt looks like a pair of loose Eastern trousers, and the woman who wears it must possess an uncommonly well-turned ankle.

Above this trousered skirt the body is wrapped with a wide strip of metallic cloth. This wrinkles along the figure from bust to hips, without any curve. As a dash of coquetry, and in

utter opposition to the Orientalism of the rest of the gown, there is a huge and conspicuous bow of the metallic cloth placed at the back over one hip and one end of it streams downward for two yards on the floor.

As a buyer remarked when he saw it on the mannikin, "She looks as though she had broken away from her hitching post."

Another eccentric feature that the Paris gowns accentuate is the cap sleeve. It just covers the top of the arm, which it closely hugs. We have wondered much about this fashion. It seemed a very strange one to put out at a time when practical clothes were demanded by the world, but its source was a practical one—it was taken from the short or rolled-up sleeves of the women munition workers. As gloves are not worn in Paris in the evening, because the women there have followed the American and English custom of leaving their arms bare whenever their neck is bare, there is no reason for the French woman to complain that these sleeves demand high priced evening gloves. As far as possible Paris also omits gloves for the street, and for the reason that she never goes out in any kind of weather without a wrap. We may follow her in this custom.

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## LATE AUTOMOBILE NEWS FOR CAR OWNER AND DEALER

### WOULDN'T DRIVE IF THERE WAS DANGER

That's the Way Ralph De Palma Regards His Racing Feats.

"Isn't racing awful dangerous?" Ralph De Palma must answer this question at least fifty times every day that he works his fast new "90" or "95" in speed or on the race track. And every time his answer is the same: "If I thought it was, I wouldn't do it!" "But don't race drivers get hurt and killed?" suggests the questioner. People seem to have a childlike interest in discussing with the speed king all the different things that might happen to him.

Yes, they do—but only when accidents occur," is De Palma's reply.

By which he means that every mishap in his own speed career has been definitely traceable to an accident—a tire blow, a bolt flew through the radiator, something like that. But something is just as likely to happen while father is climbing up the step-ladder in length of stove pipe, De Palma points out and for the reason he maintains that step-ladders are dangerous and father is apt to have an accident no less than the automobile racing driver.

In fact, the probabilities are very much against heads of families climbing step-ladders as compared with speed kings meeting disaster, because the latter are few in number and people who climb step-ladders are a multitude.

As an illustration that racing drivers can be careful, De Palma cites the 100 per cent record of his friend, Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, the former auto racing star, who went to France in Uncle Sam's aviation service last April and

in seven months of air fighting brought down twenty-six German planes. This was a better record than any made by American fliers in the famous Lafayette Squadron, which had over three years' experience. Yet Rickenbacker never crashed a single airplane or even lost a wing or a tail. He brought down eighteen Germans with one spad machine and ran another for 120 hours, though the average life of that type of plane was only nine hours in fighting service.

De Palma has been a serious student of speed for 16 years and is now spoken of as a veteran, though he is only 36 years old and still going strong and faster than ever. His first speed work was as a bicycle racer, a line that he took up because, being athletic in his tastes, he thought it would be good body culture.

Then he graduated into motorcycle racing and from that to automobiles. His first experience in the latter line was in 1908, when he did a mile in 51 seconds. At Daytona, Florida, the other day, he did a mile in less than half the time, 24.82 seconds, or practically two and a half miles a minute.

These records are not exactly comparable officially, because the speed of 1908 was made on a dirt track with a racing car within the 300 cubic inch displacement limits set for racing, whereas the 1919 record was made in a 905 cubic inch Packard equipped with an aviation engine built for speed, pure and simple, and not adaptable for competitive track racing. But as records of how fast a human being can get over a mile of beach and also as measures of the development of a speed king, they are certainly interesting.

No limit has yet been reached in automobile racing, says De Palma. Owing to trouble with the official electric timing device

in Florida the top speed of his big car was not put on record. So he hurried out to Santa Monica Beach in California, determined to bring out the utmost speed that can be secured from this latest creation.

De Palma broke a record of nearly 8 years, standing in Florida—that of the late Bob Burman, who in 1911 drove a big Hiltzen Benz car of German make at a pace of nearly 143 miles an hour. Burman's car had difficulty in keeping on the ground, owing to the tendency to plant due to the terrific speed. But through scientific balancing and also the more even application of power from twelve cylinders De Palma's car shows perfect traction, leaving uniform wheel marks on the sand.

This gives a basis for pushing on further through higher power and still greater refinements in construction. Two and a half miles a minute is going some, and there is a reason.

De Palma considers it merely interesting. For he is looking to the future, a period of more than a year hence, and perhaps only a matter of months, when the foreign automobile builders will have returned to peace production and developed new speed marvels with which to again invade the United States. As an American racing driver, working with an American car, built on lines developed by our own war experience, De Palma is glad to be leading the procession to-day. He wants to see American cars stay in the lead, and is working toward that end.

There is a reason. The car which De Palma drives to-day represents the contribution of American private enterprise to aviation, as contrasted with the products of European makers stimulated by Government subsidies for war. The big 905 aviation motor in De Palma's Packard was de-

signed by American engineers and built in an American factory during the same early 1915 period when European manufacturers were developing aviation engines to meet the desperate need of the Allies on the western front.

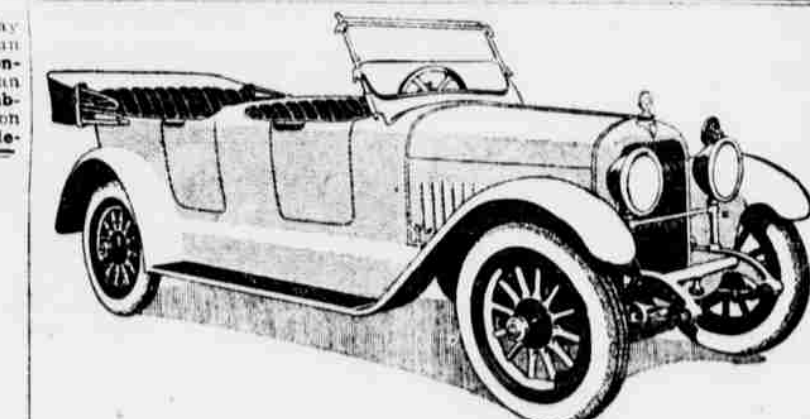
It was complete and ready for action before America declared war on Germany. So De Palma is demonstrating more than speed with his remarkable new car. He is demonstrating American design, American manufacturing methods and an American industrial ideal, as contrasted with Europe.

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